

Message Text

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PAGE 01 CAIRO 08065 131500Z
ACTION NEA-10

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CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00
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FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6599
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL ALEXANDRIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 08065

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ENRG, PBOR, IS, EG, US
SUBJ: ISRAELI DEFINED MEDIAN LINE AND ZONE OF CONTROL IN
- GULF OF SUEZ

REF: USDAO TEL AVIV 0588 MARCH 78 DTG 071955Z

1. DURING CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFF MARCH 12, EGPC
CHAIRMAN LEITHY EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER COORDINATES GIVEN
BY ISRAELI CAPTAIN TO AMOCO WHICH DEFINE BOUNDARIES OF
ISRAELI ZONE OF CONTROL IN GULF OF SUEZ. LEITHY POINTED
OUT THAT LINE COMPOSED OF THESE POINTS IS CONSIDERABLY
WEST OF ANY STANDARD PLOTTING OF "MEDIAN LINE" IN THIS
AREA. HE ASKED FORCEFULLY WHAT EXACTLY IS IT ISRAELIS
WANT IN GULF SINCE IT SEEMS "THEY DRAW A LINE WHEREVER AND
WHENEVER THEY WANT."

2. IN LIGHT LEITHY'S COMMENTS, BELIEVE IT BEARS
MENTIONING THAT ORIGINAL AMOCO DRILLING PLAN WAS NOT
REPEAT NOT DEvised WITH BENEFIT OF COORDINATES PROVIDED BY
ISRAELI CAPTAIN. PLAN BASED ON STANDARD PLOTTING OF
"MEDIAN LINE" IN THIS AREA. AMOCO (AND, WE MUST ASSUME,
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PAGE 02 CAIRO 08065 131500Z

EGPC) SATISFIED ITSELF THAT DRILLING WOULD NOT VIOLATE
ISRAELI ZONE OF CONTROL AS THEY COULD DEFINE IT AT THE
TIME. NEW ELEMENT INTRODUCED WHEN ISRAELI CAPTAIN
PROVIDED DIFFERENT TERMS OF REFERENCE IN FORM OF LINE
COORDINATES. AMOCO REPORTEDLY ASKED ISRAELI CAPTAIN IF
REVISED LINE FOLLOWED MIDPOINT PLOTTING AND HE IS SAID TO
HAVE REPLIED IT DID NOT.

3. WE ALSO FIND IT INTERESTING THAT ORIGINAL ISRAELI NAVY REACTION TO OUR INFORMING THEM OF AMOCO PLANS WAS THAT DRILLING POINT ITSELF WAS INDEED WEST OF LINE (SEE PARA 1A REFTTEL). IT IS TO BE OBSERVED, HOWEVER, THAT PATROL BOAT CAPTAIN AND SUBSEQUENTLY ISRAELI GOVERNMENT, TOOK POSITION THAT ACTUAL DRILLING LOCATION, NOT MERELY ANCHOR MARKER BUOYS, IS EAST OF LINE.

4. ABOVE IS BACKGROUND FOR RUBASH'S HESITANCY EVENING MARCH 12-13 IN RESPONDING IMMEDIATELY WHEN ASKED ABOUT POSITION OF EASTERN ANCHORS WITH REGARD TO "MEDIAN LINE." HE IS CERTAIN THEY ARE WEST OF CONVENTIONAL MIDPOINT PLOTTING. HE IS LESS CERTAIN WITH REGARD TO ISRAELI-DEFINED LINE. IN ANY CASE THERE IS NO CLEAR AGREEMENT, BY DEFINITION, OF WHERE ISRAELI ZONE OF CONTROL BEGINS AND ENDS. WE BELIEVE THAT AMOCO (AND PROBABLY EGPC, WHICH IS KEPT AWARE OF AMOCO'S OPERATIONS) BASED THEIR INITIAL ACTIONS ON AVAILABLE INFORMATION AND THAT THEY ATTEMPTED TO CONSIDER ISRAELI SENSITIVITIES. WHEN RULES OF GAME CHANGED ON THEM THEY FOUND THEMSELVES WITH A PROBLEM. EILTS

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